



Board of Directors

PRESIDENT

Mayor Robert L. Bowser
East Orange, New Jersey

2nd VICE PRESIDENT

Mayor Hilliard L. Hampton, Jr.
Inkster, Michigan

3rd VICE PRESIDENT

Mayor Ron Davis
Prichard, Alabama

TREASURER

Mayor Jamie Mayo
Monroe, Louisiana

ASSISTANT TREASURER

Mayor James L. Walls, Jr.
District Heights, Maryland

SECRETARY

Mayor Johnny L. DuPree, Ph.D.
Hattiesburg, Mississippi

ASSISTANT SECRETARY

Mayor Mary Ajoku
Cruger, Mississippi

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS

Mayor John White
Ames, Texas

BLACK WOMEN MAYORS CAUCUS

Mayor Velma H. Jenkins, Ph.D.
Shuqualak, Mississippi

CHAPLAIN

Mayor James K.S. Knox
Northwest, North Carolina

PARLIAMENTARIAN

Mayor Otis T. Wallace
Florida City, Florida

Mayor Dave Bing
Detroit, Michigan

Mayor Antonio Blue
Dobbins Heights, North Carolina

Mayor Michael Blunt
Chesilhurst, New Jersey

Mayor Irene H. Brodie, Ph.D.
Robbins, Illinois

Mayor Edward Brown
St. Joseph, Louisiana

Mayor Willie Burns
Washington, Georgia

Mayor Michael B. Coleman
Columbus, Ohio

Mayor Andre' DeBerry
Holly Springs, Mississippi

Mayor Evelyn Winn-Dixon
Riverdale, Georgia

Mayor Kevin Johnson
Sacramento, California

Mayor Dwight Jones
Richmond, Virginia

Mayor John Marks
Tallahassee, Florida

Mayor Michael Nutter
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Mayor Andre Pierre
North Miami, Florida

Mayor Kasim Reed
Atlanta, Georgia

Mayor Gary Richardson
Midfield, Alabama

Mayor Raymond Steele
Eutaw, Alabama

Mayor A.C. Wharton
Memphis, Tennessee

Mayor Frank A. Wilson
Bolton, North Carolina

Mayor Terry Wright
Brunson, South Carolina

June 28, 2011

Hon. Julian Genachowski
Chairman
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20554

RE: Following Up On Our Meeting of June 23, 2011
Rural Broadband Report to Congress
AT&T Merger (WT Docket 11-65)

Dear Chariman Genachowski:

On behalf of the National Conference of Black Mayors (NCBM) and the 40 million Americans NCBM's members represent, thank you for being so gracious as to meet with our delegation on June 23 to discuss both rural and urban city mobile broadband, the Commission's July 17 Rural Broadband Report to Congress, and other telecom policy issues affecting African Americans in urban and rural communities.

Whereas 38% of African American mayors preside over small and impoverished rural communities in the southeast. Few of these communities enjoy the fast, reliable broadband service that would serve as an engine for job creation and economic revitalization and, thus, enable their communities to build their tax bases and provide essential services. Thus we deeply appreciate your commitment to ensuring that mobile broadband reaches rural communities across the United States. As your Rural Broadband Report noted, "All Americans, whether they live in rural or urban areas, should have access to robust and affordable broadband services—as well as the ability to use those services—in order to take advantage of the many opportunities the digital revolution has created." Mobile broadband is quickly reshaping the United States landscape, and revolutionizing the way in which Americans, and people throughout the globe, are communicating, interacting, and working with one another.

As we discussed, much work must be done to ensure that the digital divide is bridged. In a recent report The Joint Center stated that of the 60% of African Americans who have not adopted broadband at home, 11% cite affordability as the reason why. As we discussed because of its affordability, African Americans overwhelmingly embrace wireless broadband to access the Internet. Not only must we work together to find a way to bring wireless broadband to every corner of the nation, we must take pointed measures to make sure that it is affordable and reliable. The Rural Broadband Report noted that "8 percent of the U.S. rural population was not covered by either type of [broadband] network as of November 2009, compared to only 2 percent of the entire U.S. population." It is imperative that we act quickly to close this urban/rural disparity in service.

NCBM also applauds the Commission in its efforts to work cooperatively with Tribal, federal, state, and local government entities and industry and consumer groups on rural broadband issues. We appreciate that to encourage rural broadband deployment, the Commission is collecting more granular broadband data and reducing barriers to broadband deployment by improving access to poles and rights of way for wire line and wireless facilities. We encourage the Commission to continue to search for and consider every potential solution available.

For example, as amplified in our joint (NAACP, NCBM and 15 additional organizations) May 31 letter regarding the AT&T/T-Mobile merger, NCBM believes that approving the merger would be one of the strongest and most viable solutions to reducing the barriers to nationwide next-generation broadband deployment and increasing the availability of spectrum nationwide.

In a subsequent meeting, we'd like to address privacy issues. Our inclination is that consumer privacy should be handled first-tier, and as a one-stop shop, by the FTC in light of its mission to protect individual consumers. Internet privacy issues are of vital importance to our mayors insofar as it impacts minority broadband adoption.

We also look forward to continuing our discussion on incentive auctions. The National Broadband Plan correctly recognized that underutilized DTV spectrum simply must be repurposed to avoid wireless spectrum exhaustion in major cities. Many of our Mayors preside over cities most affected by this spectrum crunch. Our cities' competitiveness and our citizens' economic opportunities depend highly on the success of spectrum incentive auctions. Thus NCBM would like to help the Commission achieve this much-needed objective.

The National Conference of Black Mayors is greatly appreciative of and encouraged by our meeting. We hope that the Commission continues the good work of making systematic progress to improving the lives of African Americans throughout the United States by making it possible for every American to access, adopt and use mobile broadband.

We appreciate your invitation for us to return to drill down deeper on many of the other issues we briefly mentioned in our meeting – the state of Black radio, tax and other incentives to promote minority media ownership, merger policy generally and the AT&T merger specifically, and how to close the digital divide. NCBM would like to request a follow up meeting with our Telecom/ Broadband Committee at your convenience within the next 3 weeks. We thank you for your leadership.

Respectfully,



Mayor Robert L. Bowser
NCBM President



Vanessa R. Williams
NCBM Executive Director

Presidents Emeriti
Mayor Henry Espy
Clarksdale, Mississippi
Mayor Harvey Johnson, Jr.
Jackson, Mississippi
Heather M. Hudson
Greenville, Mississippi

Past Presidents
Marion Barry
Unita Blackwell
Dr. Gordon D. Bush
Rev. Emanuel Cleaver, II
A.J. Cooper, Founder
Roosevelt Dorn
Johnny Ford, Founder
Richard G. Hatcher

Past Presidents
Dr. Robert B. Ingram
Jesse M. Norwood
James Perkins, Jr.
John H. Smith
James L. Usry
Wellington E. Webb
George L. Grace

Executive Director
Vanessa R. Williams

Headquarters • The 191 Building
191 Peachtree Street NE, Suite 849
Atlanta, Georgia 30303
404.765.6444 • Fax 404.765.6430